

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 OMB-01 AID-20 SCS-03 SCA-01 SY-10

DRC-01 EB-11 COME-00 /146 W
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R 042127Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1174

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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CONSUL CALI (BY POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 967

E O 11652 GDS

TAGS PINS, CO

SUBJ: INTERNAL SECURITY: COLOMBIAN KIDNAP VICTIM RESCUED;
AMERICAN MINING OFFICIALS STILL BEING HELD

REF BOGOTA A-267, 10381, 10254

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. CARLOS ROBERTO ANGEL, THE LAST OF FIVE MEMBERS OF TWO PROMINENT ANTIOQUIAN FAMILIES KIDNAPPED 13 MONTHS AGO, WAS RESCUED BY UNITS OF THE FOURTH BRIG FEB 2 DURING AN ENCOUNTER WITH A SMALL GROUP OF ELN GUERRILLAS. ANGEL SUFFERED HEAD WOUNDS AND AN EYE INJURY, APPARENTLY FROM GRENADE FRAGMENTS, BUT IS REPORTEDLY IN GOOD CONDITION IN A MEDELLIN CLINIC FOLLOWING SURGERY.

2. THE CLASH BETWEEN THE MIL AND THE GUERRILLAS TOOK PLACE IN A HILLY AREA NEAR THE TIGUE RIVER NOT FAR FROM SEGOVIA IN THE DEPT OF ANTIOQUIA. THREE GUERRILLAS WERE KILLED AND THREE CAPTURED.
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NO GOC LOSSES WERE ANNOUNCED, BUT THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS

THAT FIVE SOLDIERS WERE KILLED.

3. TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ENCOUNTER THE NEW COMDT OF THE 4TH BRIG, BRIGGEN ARMANDO OREJUELA ESCOBAR, TOLD VISITING COLOMBIAN DESK OFFICER MAISTO AND MEDELLIN CONSUL COOPER THAT BRIG ANTI-GUERRILLA OPS CONTINUE UNABATED. MAISTO REITERATED USG CONCERN THAT THE OPS BE CONDUCTED IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO MINIMIZE THE DANGER TO U S CITIZEN HOSTAGES KAST AND DOTSON. OREJUELA SAID THE ARMY IS TAKING ALL POSSIBLE PRECAUTIONS; ONE STEP TAKEN WAS TO DISTRIBUTE PHOTOS OF THE TWO AMERICANS TO ALL TROOPS IN THE AREA IN THE HOPES OF AVOIDING THEIR BEING MISTAKEN FOR GUERRILLAS. HOWEVER OREJUELA EMPHASIZED THAT IN A COMBAT SITUATION ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN AND THE SAFETY OF THE TWO MINING OFFICIALS CANNOT BE GUARANTEED.

4. MAISTO AND THE CONSUL ALSO TALKED WITH FRONTINO MINE MANAGER ROBERT SWAIN. SWAIN CONFIRMED THAT THE GOC HAD RETURNED THE RANSOM MONEY TO THE COMPANY. HE SAID HE HAS RECEIVED INDIRECT INDICATIONS THAT KAST AND DOTSON ARE ALIVE AND WELL, BUT CANNOT BE CERTAIN OF THIS. MEANWHILE HE INDICATED THE COMPANY IS WAITING TO BE CONTACTED AGAIN BY THE GUERRILLAS; HE SAID THE LAST CONTACT HAD BEEN THE ABORTIVE RANSOM PAYMENT ATTEMPT IN LATE OCT.

4. COMMENT: THE DISTRIBUTION OF KAST AND DOTSON PHOTOS TO THE TROOPS IS A POSITIVE INDICATION THAT THE GOC IS BEING RESPONSIVE TO USG CONCERNS OVER THE TWO MEN'S SAFETY. HOWEVER, OREJUELA MADE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THE ANTI GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN WILL CONTINUE, AND THE WOUNDING OF THE ANGEL YOUTH IN THE RECENT ENCOUNTER UNDERSCORES THE RISK TO HOSTAGES WHICH IS INHERENT IN THE SITUATION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, BUSINESSMEN, PARAMILITARY FORCES, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, RESCUE OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BOGOTA00967
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740259/aaaaccyn.tel
Line Count: 91
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BOGOTA A-267, 10381, 10254
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <27 NOV 2002 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTERNAL SECURITY: COLOMBIAN KIDNAP VICTIM RESCUED; AMERICAN MINING OFFICIALS STILL BEING HELD
TAGS: PINS, CASC, PFOR, CO, US, (KAST, RENE FRANCIS), (DOTSON, WILLIS LEON), (ROBERTO ANGEL, CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005